

## Family Homelessness Advisory Group Meeting January 14, 2015 Discussion Notes

### Meeting Objectives:

- Address any further work that the IAC directs the Advisory Group to complete prior to the March IAC meeting.
- Provide recommendation to IAC regarding temporary removal of FUP vouchers from FHC
- Provide feedback on interim decision making process for FHC

**Announcements:** King County Housing Authority's waitlist opens on January 28<sup>th</sup>; application available online; 2500 slots available; and, closes on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Recap of January IAC Meeting:** Kira Zylstra provided a summary of the items that will be taken to IAC or Funders group for decisions/action:

- Barrier reduction
- Governance
- Prioritization/assessment tool
- Data integration

Potential areas for the AG: screening tool; fair housing overlay; CEA model; and, adaptive change vs. technical change.

**FUP Voucher Exemption:** There was discussion on a proposal to have the current Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers temporarily removed from FHC. There are currently 24 KCHA FUP vouchers being filled through FHC by local non-profit providers. From KCHA's perspective, it makes sense to pull them out due to the unique requirements/screening process that families have to go through (ultimately DSHS decides). Katharine Gale reiterated her support of this action, since she is not aware of any other communities who fill FUP's through their CEA process. There was some concern expressed by a AG member about allowing exemptions ("slippery slope") and that there should be a very clear rationale when making decisions to exempt specific types of units. Katharine explained that these are very specific resources targeted for a unique population and that there is a very specific screening process by DCFS (all which add to the timeliness to support family reunification). Katharine emphasized that we should examine the intent of the units, which in this case overlaps with homelessness but it's not about ending homelessness.

- The recommendation was to ask the IAC at the March meeting to temporarily remove the 24 FUP vouchers from CEA/FHC and evaluate this issue during the system redesign.

**Clarification of Recommendations:** Katharine provided additional clarification on a few of the items from the report:

Reorientation of Referral Process: King County created a system of "we need to fill these units" rather than "we need to find the right housing resource for this family". In order to switch this, we need to: 1) prioritize by needs, and 2) approach the process from the family side to find the right program/unit. Right now we are unable to see how many families don't receive a referral. Katharine's suggestion is that we consider working both ends of the list with specific prioritization (we would need to determine what this is).

Diversion – progressive engagement; connection to RRH; etc.: What we are doing locally is different from most communities (serving literally homeless)—and exciting. Her recommendation is that we need to get beyond "labels" or "programs" – making these services/resources available to all families at any point in the system/process (e.g. tools for diversion and RRH are the same). Goal should be to return to reasonable housing and be reasonably stable. The source and the label should be invisible to the client. In Los Angeles, Family Solution Centers provide Diversion and RRH resources; to the client the source is invisible. Salt Lake Utah is another example of a community doing this approach..

**Structural Changes to the CEA Model:** Katharine facilitated a discussion on the pros and cons of a more decentralized model. She clarified what she meant by 'centralized' vs. 'decentralized' models:

- Centralized is generally one agency/provider doing the assessments and matching/referrals (this could still happen in multiple locations).

- Decentralized (or multiple entry points) could mean: Multiple agencies (ideally already existing agencies) use one common assessment tool to assess families while providing more comprehensive services, such as access to diversion/housing dollars and some case management while trying to place families. We are not talking about a “no wrong door” model due to the very large number of providers and services in our community.

Most of the discussion centered on the multiple entry points model.

Areas that the group agreed are essential in any model:

- Reduce and standardize screening/eligibility criteria for programs (and eliminate multiple steps)
- One assessment tool (revise current or adopt new tool)
- Prioritization – need to determine our community’s prioritization and create/adopt an assessment tool that will match families with highest needs to the right programs
- Family-centric system
- Fixing the database
- Reprioritize the funding models
  - New money coming in
  - Reallocate what we have to build the new system/model
- Community ownership

Ideally, the new system would also:

- Increase capacity for linkages with mainstream resources
- Consider geographic needs – locations for entry in to the system
- Streamline connection to diversion
- Drop-in capacity for families

Other issues to address:

- Option of phone screens; more automated system for assessment
- Utilizing homeless programs/agencies vs. mainstream systems for access point
- Assistance/assessments in real time vs. adding to “wait lists”
- More data sharing/transparency
- Opportunities to make referrals/utilize affordable non-homeless targeted units

**Next Steps- March IAC Meeting:** There will be a funders meeting on Feb. 2nd (will discuss the overall vision for the future of CEA, for all populations). Michelle will pull a small group together to start to dig further in to the decentralized model options/logistics. After Feb funders meeting, will start to build out plan & timeline. In the meantime, we will utilize existing funders groups (CEA funders) for any FHC process/operation decisions that need to be made.

**Interim Decision Making Process for Current FHC model:** Although it is not anticipated that there will be any major decision points/changes that will come up over the next several months (outside of the decisions being made related to the recommendations by IAC and Funders Group), there is a need for an interim decision making structure to support FHC until the larger structural changes are implemented. The AG supported the proposal to use the FHC funders to make any decisions or run operational changes by during this interim phase. CEH staff will keep the AG informed on the status of CEA as the work moves forward (i.e. how the implementation of WATCH goes, etc.).